

## Intelligence

Richard M. Helms, who was being described in the United States Senate only a short time ago as an experienced professional who was well qualified for his new job as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, has now suffered a public spanking from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. His offense was that he affronted the fearsome dignity of the United States Senate by writing a letter to the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, expressing his approval of an editorial which had criticized Senator Fulbright, the Foreign Relations Committee chairman.

The editorial, it might be noted, had referred to Senator Fulbright as "the crafty Arkansan," a rather dubious description in as much as the point of the comment was that Fulbright had lost his attempt to have the Foreign Relations Committee represented on the special committee which supervises the CIA. At any rate, the editorial expressed the newspaper's pleasure at Fulbright's setback. Helms expressed his pleasure at the editorial and then, so to speak, the roof fell in.

Senator Fulbright, backed by other senators, demanded an apology. Several senators thundered their indignation, and few seemed to see anything funny about it. Mr. Helms quickly apologized. As the head of our super-secret spy agency, he had obviously erred in publicly expressing an opinion about such a political issue as a Senate jurisdictional dispute.

Mr. Helms has learned his lesson the hard way. Maybe the Senate, which has been grappling with some of the larger problems in Washington without much success, has blown off some of its frustration now and can get back to work. We can laugh to ourselves, if we choose, at the Senate, at Mr. Helms, or both.

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